# RESTORATION REVIEW

**The New Humanity . . .**

## THE NEW MINISTRY

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The thesis of this article is that in the new ministry in Christ every child of God is a minister, even though he is not, and perhaps should not be, a professional "Minister" in any sense that separates him from other Christians. Amos was certainly one of the great prophets, and yet he denies being a prophet. Since he goes on to describe how God called him to prophesy, we must understand his denial to be a repudiation of a ministry that would separate him from the common herd. He was but a farmer who was called to speak for God.

It is true that prophecy was a function in the old dispensation that was ordained of God, and there were those, like Samuel, who were "confirmed as a prophet of the Lord." Even in the Christian congregations God's gifts included that some should be prophets (Eph. 4:11). And yet the implication is clear, even in the *Old Testament*, that God wants all his children to be ministers for him. Moses saw the spiritual potential of this, for, when two men of The Seventy became ecstatic due to the Spirit's influence, he says: "I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would confer his spirit on them all!" (Num. 11:29) We commend this attitude to our brethren who are so wrought up over those among us who are ecstatic with the Spirit. Tongue-speaking, or whatever it was, didn't bother Moses. If it meant that God's Spirit was working on them, he was for it!

Exodus 19 makes it clear that God's intention was that the people he had called out of Egypt would become "a kingdom of ministers": "If only you will now listen to me and keep my covenant, then out of all peoples you shall become my special possession; for the whole earth is mine. You shall be my kingdom of priests, my holy nation."

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**Volume 12, No. 8** **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **October 1970**

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Something obviously went wrong, for it isn’t long until a special priesthood is formed, and so the Levitical priesthood is a familiar subject to readers of the Old Testament. But it is an intrusion upon what God intended, allowed only because Israel rejected what God offered them. They would have all been their own priest and priests to each other, for God would have dealt with them directly, without any kind of mediation of man, had they not rejected it. Once they see the thunder and lightning, the mountain smoking, and hear the sound of the trumpet, they withdraw from God’s presence, and say to Moses: “Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but if God speaks to us we shall die.”

The divine intention is supposedly realized in the Christian dispensation, for 1 Pet. 2:5 reads: “Come, and let yourselves be built, as living stones, into a spiritual temple; become a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ.” He goes on to identify the Christians as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a dedicated nation, and a people claimed by God for his own.”

Thus the concept of the priesthood of every believer became an important principle in every major reformatory effort in Christian history. The reformer has realized that the church has been negligent in its responsibility as “a royal priesthood” and has been willing to sell its blessing for a mess of porridge. Tyndale and Wycliffe endeavored to restore the Bible to every man’s living room in his own language, so that the man who drives the plow will be as versed in the scriptures as a gentleman of the cloth. Luther made the priesthood of every believer the hallmark of his reformation. Campbell challenged the prerogatives of the clergy, insisting that they arrogate to themselves functions that God decreed for all believers.

The new humanity has a new ministry, one that speaks to the needs of our generation, for it is a ministry of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is a ministry based on love more than on knowledge. Another can effectively minister to my needs when it is evident to me that he loves me and is truly concerned for my welfare. Whether he knows more or less than I is not so important. We can all learn from any man who hungers and thirsts for righteousness, for the Lord promises that such a one will be filled, and in his filling we are all edified. There is something refreshing in being around a brother who longs for truth as the hart pants for the water-brook. Any system that stymies such longing or obstructs others from sharing in it is a denial of the priesthood of all believers.

This is not to say that the new ministry is mostly a matter of enthusiasm and spontaneity. As important as these are, a place must always be made for knowledge. The Bible insists that we are to “Try your hardest to supplement your faith with virtue, virtue with knowledge.” And Paul could write to the Romans: “You yourselves are quite full of goodness and equipped with knowledge of every kind, well able to give advice to one another.” Again and again the scriptures speak of our “exhorting one another” and “edifying each other,” which of course infers knowledge on our part.

As priests of God we are therefore people who have our homework to do. We are to study. Some will be better at this than others, and of course some will be better teachers than others. But surely there is more than *one man* in a congregation with the ability to encourage the community when it is assembled. One of the great principles of scripture is that the Christian, like his Lord, is in this world to minister, not to be ministered to. The vast majority of our people assemble in their congregations with no plans whatever of encouraging their fellows with some vital, relevant truth that they have gleaned from the

Bible that week. Instead they assemble to be "preached to" by a professional minister, which reflects a system that is a total stranger to scripture.

The new ministry is not only scriptural but also sound. By *sound* I mean it is wholesome and effective. We should be willing to do something just because it pleases God, but in the case of the royal priesthood we can see that there is much to be said for it, apart from being scriptural. Perhaps that is why it is scriptural, because it is right! Like the injunction not to steal. God enjoined against it because it was wrong!

1. *It is pragmatically right.* Think of the trouble the new ministry saves us. Nearly all our difficulties in some way involve "the minister," who is of course *the man* in the congregation. Remove him from the scene (out among the unevangelized where *as an evangelist* he belongs) and a whole cluster of problems go with him. Then perhaps the community can be nourished by elders and other qualified persons. After all the Bible does say, "Whatever gift each of you may have received, use it in service to one another, like good stewards dispensing the grace of God" (1 Pet. 4:10). This is pragmatically possible when the pulpit is not virtually owned and monopolized by one man.

2. *It is economically right.* Those who are attracted to the penniless carpenter of Nazareth, who had no place to lay his head, are likely to be suspicious of anything in religion that has a high price tag on it. This includes million dollar buildings and the expensive system that demands them. A large part of a congregation's budget goes for what has the odd name of "home evangelism," which is a euphemism for preaching to the same folk week after week, year after year. If the budget for "home evangelism" means that the money is being spent to tell the neighborhood about Christ, it would be different. It means that the congregation is spending the money on itself, so it can be "preached to" to its liking.

It is sobering to stop and think about the way we are spending God's money. Poor stewards we are when a large part of every dollar goes for our churchly comfort. Think of the cows we could buy for Korea, wheat for India, or gift pacs for Vietnam. Or the missionaries we could support around the world. One resolution that is ever so Christian and scriptural that would transform us from a mediocre sect into a dynamic community of saints is this: *Never will we spend any money on preaching for ourselves, but we will generously support those who will carry the gospel to others.*

And while we are resolving it would be well to vow that we will never again build another church house. That too would make a difference!

3. *It is psychologically right.* Some of my discerning friends who are observant of our congregations insist that our people do not listen in church. The sermon may serve as background "music" for some constructive meditation, but no one to speak of really listens. Often it is boring. Only a very few speakers are gifted enough to attract and hold attention. In terms of pedagogy the pulpit-pew arrangement is the worst possible teaching

situation. While even a sharing ministry, with various ones participating, would be difficult in a huge assembly, it would be more interesting. It is psychologically sound when one man is sharing with another, drawing from his experiences in everyday life or telling about his victories of faith. We all need to express ourselves, sharing our faith, telling others what God has done through us. If the assembly fails to provide for this need in some way, it is psychologically as well as scripturally unsound.

The new ministry includes more than teaching and sharing, for it embraces all *service* that is implied by the new humanity. Jesus was ministering when he washed feet and cooked fish. Our greatest ministry may be in writing a letter to a lonely prisoner, visiting a shut-in, hauling the neighbor's kids to school, cleaning house for the sick, or taking someone's shift at the factory so that he can take a needed rest.

The new ministry is always motivated by love rather than by fear or even by a sense of obligation. Paul speaks of the "love that binds everything together in perfect harmony," and it is this love that gives vitality and significance to the new ministry. Just as we love because Christ first loved, so we serve because he first served. We seek no applause or reward. We seek only to be like him.

And in the end when he says, "Well done, good and faithful servant," that will be too much, for we are so un-deserving. Only his goodness can make it so.—*the Editor*

## ON BAPTISM

I hope I am not being unkind, but I should reckon it highly probable that most of us who are baptized are ignorant of the fact that we are baptized into Christ's death.

The church baptizes in order to make possible a response to the love of God in Christ for us all.

—*D. W. C. Ford,* College of Preachers, London

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## FROM CHURCH HOUSE TO HOUSE CHURCH

Those inclined to historical study can make a good case for the claim that early Christianity began to lose its impetus when it moved into buildings and carried on its "program" behind brick and mortar. It is clear enough from the scriptures that the primitive

Christians scattered to preach and assembled to worship. There was probably at first no one "Lord's Day," for both the sabbath and the first day had significance to them. They were, after all, still Jews. They continued frequenting the temple and synagogues. Assemblies of "the Way," which was no doubt first viewed as another Jewish sect, met whenever and wherever they could. Private homes, the catacombs, lecture halls were likely places. By 115 A.D. the meetings began to go underground, for by that time it was against the law to be a Christian.

To think of the community of saints then meeting on the corner of Fifth and Izzard, with a sign reading "Church of Christ," and times of worship recorded for both Sunday and Wednesday, with the worshippers scurrying about trying to find a seat in the back, is to think of the unlikely. They met when and where they could, perhaps secretly, passing the word around obliquely by such signs as the fish. They certainly owned no property and had no buildings, perhaps not for 300 years, by which time Christianity was the legalized religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine.

By the time we read of buildings we find a decadent religion, one converted by the Empire rather than one that had converted the Empire. In its most vibrant and dynamic era Christianity had no buildings in which to concentrate its activities. The homes of the saints were its headquarters and the centers for its operation. Its power was in its message, not its real estate. They had Jesus, not paraphernalia.

It is ironical that in spite of our multiplicity of divisions we have never had a major fission over church houses. We have divided over doctrine, over how to serve the Supper, over how to do mission work, over how to sing; but church buildings no. To the contrary, each of our parties goes out and builds another house. It would be much more reasonable to split up over our costly real estate, and all that goes with it, if we have to split at all. Think of the money saved for benevolence and missions; think of the jealousy and competition between congregations that would be eliminated. The answer may lie in the fact that we did not have buildings until we had a special priesthood or clergy. New parties are usually formed around some preacher, who of course wants a building as a monument to his success and as a base for his operation. Buildings have their pulpits, and pulpits always have their clerical implications, which often include the infallibility, more or less, of the pulpiteer.

With the emergence of the building has come a beclouding of some of the lesser, but still important, characteristics of early Christianity. The kiss of love or the holy kiss, for instance. It would seem awkward in the formal setting one finds at Fifth and Izzard, but ever so natural in the persecution-ridden atmosphere of a saintly gathering in a Roman catacomb. In comes a brother that you thought was in Nero's prison, waiting to be thrown to the lions. What do you do, walk up, Stick out a cold fish and say, "How's it been

going"? We can see them embracing and kissing one another in a spontaneous outpouring of concern.

And who can fancy a foot washing ceremony on the plush carpets of Fifth and Izzard. How embarrassing! What would the neighbors think? But it appears likely in a peasant's home, where a brother is moved by Jesus' words: "*You* ought to wash one another's feet."

Then there is the spontaneous outburst of prayer and praise. *Maranatha!,* which meant to them, "Come, Lord Jesus," was such an outcry. But at Fifth and Izzard if we did that, the presiding officer would have to say, "Brother Jones will now say *Maranatha* for us." It is likely that no one was called on to lead a prayer in a Christian assembly until we had church buildings. And "the saying of the Amen," which was a part of their service, is as rare these days as hen's teeth. And how often do you hear a heart-warming *Praise God!* in our assemblies? It was common in theirs.

The church house has all but killed spontaneity in our services. Only those speak who have been appropriately employed (and usually paid) to do so. Only those pray who are called upon to do so. "The prayers of the congregation," always prominent in the early assemblies, is virtually unknown to us.

All the bugaboo about what the sisters can or cannot do is mostly a church house problem. If we had never had a pulpit or a pew, a lot of the questions would never have arisen. Huddled together in some cave in Thessalonica, who would have called in question some sister's cry to God for the protection of her family? We associate "preaching" with the pulpit or "teaching" with standing before a class. It has no such formal connotation in the scriptures.

Then there's singing and the organ and all that. Oftentimes in a primitive assembly they dared not sing at all, lest they expose themselves to arrest. Even today behind the Iron Curtain there is no instrumental music question, for the evangelical church has gone underground. If they sing, they whisper it!

Church buildings also solidify our divisions, literally and physically as well as in sentiment. The building stands as a monument to the separation. If the church in a given city was distributed into a hundred homes, the divisions would be less noticeable and less enduring. Buildings fix and guarantee the prolongation of division.

But for all this we do have our buildings and they are likely to be around for awhile. They are still going up as symbols of our modernity and our affluence, bigger and more expensive. Moreover they are status symbols and barometers of success. I find myself increasingly disliking them, almost nauseated by them, and almost totally unimpressed by their magnificence. They remind me of Socrates' insistence that for something to be truly magnificent it must also be appropriate. Even gold, he taught, is not beautiful if it bedecks an idol, but on a lovely woman it too becomes lovely. If I could see our buildings as

workshops, as centers for social action, headquarters for programs for the poor, used daily by those who lack housing, then it would be different.

But, as I say, we have our buildings and this article is not going to change that fact. Nor am 1 suggesting that we burn them down or walk off and leave them. I might insist however, if I thought it would do any good, that we build no more.

If it is true that Christianity became livid when it set itself up in buildings, is it also true that the restoration of dynamic religion will come as we turn from the building back to the house church?

It is significant that in these days of spiritual revolution, in which the institutional church is fighting for its life, there is a definite move back to the house church.

A brother in Dallas called me recently to tell me he was starting a church in his home, "a house church" he called it. He explained that he was passing the word around to brethren that he believed were bored with the *status quo,* or perhaps starved for spirituality. One prominent preacher described the Dallas Churches of Christ as "the most spiritually starved of our people anywhere," or some such words. So this brother wanted to do something about such a depressive condition. He had around 25 saints at his first meeting, coming from several old-line congregations.

Billy Graham says there are upward of one million such house groups or prayer circles throughout the world. It is estimated that among Churches of Christ-Christian Churches alone there are a hundred such house churches in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area.

There has been a tendency for the house church to be underground, which means that it exists as a reaction against the institutional church and usually without its blessings, and sometimes even without its knowledge. But there are many house churches that make a sincere effort to be both friendly and helpful toward the established churches. The participants remain loyal members of their respective congregations, attending the services as usual, the house church being extracurricular. But it is the house church that provides them with more meaningful fellowship and more spiritual food, for nearly always the house church starts because of dissatisfaction with the *status quo.*

We would hope that the Church of Christ house churches will prove to be auxiliary efforts within our established congregations, not separated groups that are antagonistic toward the rest of us. If this is the case, they can be of great service in giving the congregations a needed shot-in-the-arm. Prayer, study, and conversation can be most edifying in house meetings, and they often lead to a soul-searching that is less likely in more formal gatherings.

Those who start churches in their homes need to ask themselves some important questions. Is it really intended to be a congregation? Is there to be structure and organization? Any officers? Any work to be done as a group? Any money to be contributed? If so, who handles it and who makes the decisions? Is the Supper to be served?

If these questions are answered in the affirmative, there is a real risk that those involved are headed for a lot of trouble. We will have a lot of mini-churches emerging with problems all their own, which might eventually be more serious than "back at the church." And if they are answered in the affirmative, it means that the participants have left their congregations and started a church of their own.

Some hard questions need to be faced up to regarding the government of the church. No group of people function without agents. Someone has to rule, make decisions, exercise discipline, and otherwise "keep house for the Lord." If we are right in looking to the elders as the overseers of the congregation, then what disposition will the house church make of this? And what attitude are the participants to have toward the congregation and its elders from which they come.

If the house church is nothing more than a gathering of saints from various quarters, all of whom remain members of their respective congregations, then there would not be these problems. And we would urge our emerging "house church brethren" to honor the established churches in this regard. In this way they have a chance of giving the churches a needed transfusion of spiritual energy. And the only way to do this is for such brethren to keep on attending their regular places, avoiding any semblance of a rupture in the body. If this is not done, we are likely to have an unusual rash break out on the body of Christ, a bevy of microscopic sects. Equally weakening would be the fact that many of the most spiritual folk would be siphoned off into this kind of movement, which in turn could fizzle and leave a lot of people displaced and discouraged.

The house church is often the result of charismatic experiences occurring in congregations that will not tolerate them. It is definitely part of "the Holy Spirit movement" that provides a more conducive environment for an expression of the gifts of the Spirit, especially the speaking in tongues. When this is the case the problem of preserving peace with the congregations is more serious, for it is hard for the congregations to be forbearing. It is also difficult for the charismatic folk not to be sectarian in their attitude.

The only answer is for all of us to love Christ more than we do our preferences. Even if services are boring, we should keep attending for Jesus' sake. After all, our mission is to serve, not to be served. If a congregation is not spiritual, we should think of ourselves as called of God to do what we can to make it more spiritual. It was that way at Sardis, a church that Jesus called *dead.* Still he recognized that some "walk with me in white." They did not find refuge in some house church.

If we in the established congregations will be both loving and forbearing with those who want to have their own meetings, and even encourage this (and *attend* if we are invited), then we can go far in "preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

If this we do, from both sides, then the house church can be a blessing to those in the church house, for actually they'll be one and the same, only a way of allowing for preferences.

In all this we must remember that the institutional church is fighting for its survival as never before. And there is much about the institutional church that is good and should not die. And we must keep asking ourselves what will be left when it dies. If the church survives, if indeed it is renewed and becomes truly a community of redemption in modern society, it will be through the efforts of those who have remained within.—*the Editor*

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## A PLEA FOR "SWEET REASONABLENESS"

The term is not mine, for I borrow it from Paul Tillich, who saw it as the essence of Christian character. It points to qualities of both mind and spirit, and it is true that we so often neglect one or the other, if not both, in our relations with each other. It is man's reasonableness that distinguishes him from the rest of the animal world, and it is his spirit that identifies him as one created in God's image. It is appropriate for every man to be *reasonable,* Tillich observes, but it is the responsibility of the Christian to be *sweet* as well as reasonable.

*Sweet reasonableness* seems especially important during these times of change and revolt. Ours is increasingly becoming an irrational age. Even criminal acts have taken on the odd character of being both gruesome and meaningless. Reasonable behavior can hardly be expected in a court of justice these days. Much of the revolt on campuses across the land has lacked the old-fashioned virtue of good sense. Whether it's beards or bare feet, guitars or long hair, there are those who are frantic to get something across to the rest of us. Our problem is trying to make sense of it all.

With much of what goes on most of us would be willing to settle for a little reasonableness. It wouldn't have to be sweet. As college administrators are often tempted to say to disruptive students: *You don't have to be nice; just be sensible!*

So my plea for sweet reasonableness is to those who are disciples of Jesus, for it is right to expect more of Christians than we do those of the world. It is in being sweet—tender, kind, compassionate—that we are most like Jesus. And yet it is a quality often absent from our lives, even in our relations to each other. Jesus is more eager to make us compassionate than he is to make us right. The *sweet* prostitute was more approved in his eyes than the *right* Pharisee. When the Bible talks about God seeing not as man sees, since God looks upon the heart, it means something like this: *God looks deep inside man to see if he has tender and loving feelings toward his fellows.* We usually judge by something

else, such as whether one is in the right church, whether he has followed the proper ritual, whether he is doctrinally right. This is why one may be in good standing within most congregations and yet be rude in his treatment of others and less than exemplary in his personal life. We have succeeded to producing a people who consider it more important to be right than to be good.

Thomas Langford, now interim dean of the Graduate School at Texas Tech, in a recent visit with me in Dallas related to me a story that well illustrates the place of sweet reasonableness. It concerns the eldership of a non-class congregation that was asked to minister to a sick man by way of prayer and the anointing of oil. Despite the plain language of James 5:14, where the sick man is instructed to call for the elders for both prayer and anointing, these elders were not used to this sort of thing. Nonetheless they responded to the brother's request, praying for him and anointing him with oil. A *first* for them. The sick man, who chose membership in their congregation though not of non-class persuasion, then revealed to them that he had had recent experiences with charismatic gifts, including speaking in tongues.

One would suppose that would have been *too* much for any orthodox eldership, but these men responded most graciously, assuring the brother that if God had dealt with him in such a way to his edification, they were happy.

Isn't that a precious story! Here you have elders in an ultra-conservative wing of our brotherhood doing things that are no doubt surprising even to themselves. They are to be commended for *growing*. When we grow we help others to grow. It was a reasonable and scriptural response to a brother's need. It was elegantly sweet and tender. They could have been so *"right"* as to be harsh and cruel. They could have destroyed a brother for the sake of doctrine. Sweet reasonableness recognizes that a man doesn't have to be exactly right about everything before we tender our blessings to him. He can even be wrong about a lot of things and still be right in what really counts, in that he hungers and thirsts after right-eousness.

But other instances of recent notice illustrate just the opposite of sweet reasonableness, and it is these that motivate my plea for a change of attitude toward our brothers who are hearing a different drumbeat. The case of Pat Boone is a noteworthy one, and part of his story has been told in recent issues of this journal. Poor Pat, he is something of an issue in the brotherhood now, which is other than what he would desire. His correspondence with the college professor, some of which appears elsewhere in this issue, reveals that Pat and the professor have long been friends; but now Pat, due to his experiences in the Spirit, is being both isolated and reprimanded. The professor plans to issue a book under some such title as *Pat Boone and the Speaking in Tongues*, drawing heavily upon information revealed to him in private letters and conversations. And all this despite Pat's protests.

That isn't all. A number of our journals have declared open season on the Boone's. One brother's kindness was so overflowing that he explained Shirley Boone's experiences as a reaction to her father's passing. But Pat points out in the book that Shirley was well into these experiences *before* her father's death. Pat also tells us of the trials through which his congregation and its elders have been subjected from sources throughout the brotherhood. He thinks they have an opportunity to show the brethren what congregational autonomy means!

Only a shallow and immature people could react to public figures in the way our people have handled this Boone thing. We ought to be ashamed of ourselves, and the professor in question should repent, preferably in sackcloth and ashes. We simply are not a free people so long as we refuse to allow a brother to be different from ourselves. Pat was all right so long as we could use him over the country in youth rallies and fund-raising affairs. Now that he tells us that his religion was not *then* real to him, and that it is *now* dynamic and exciting, we want to clobber him.

It is all right for our folk to suffer frustration and worry, to be tired and bored, and even to conform their lives to that of worldly people so long as they remain loyal to our unwritten creed. The Boone's have had experiences that have transformed their lives. They are witnessing to others in Hollywood and immersing some of them in their backyard pool. The Boone girls are now excited over religion and it is something contagious among the youth of their acquaintance.

Pat is willing to share this excitement with anyone who cares to read his account of it, but he isn't trying to convert anyone to his experiences. He wants to glorify the Christ in his life, not campaign for some new experience. Nor does he say that other Christians have to be like him. He just wants to be a free man in Christ.

In spite of this gracious attitude on Pat's part and what all this has meant to him and his family, we have to respond by "writing him up" and setting him straight. Get out a book in order to set the brotherhood right!

A good dose of sweet reasonableness would be like balm to our people. Reasonable people do not always speak up. They often just listen. The bottom will not fall out of the brotherhood nor will Christ vacate his throne if for once we do *not* publish an article or a book to expose somebody. Sweet and tender souls are those who say: "It isn't all clear to me, but if it means all this to you there must be something to it, for you are my brother and I love you." Or even: "I disagree with you about the gifts of the Spirit, but I certainly agree with you about what Christ can do for us, and I thank God that in all of this he is dearer to you than ever before."

Unless we can show more of this kind of spirit toward those among us who transgress traditional lines we are in trouble as a people. Not only will we keep losing our youth, but we will stifle growth and spontaneity. When a brother gets a new idea or has some thrilling

experience in the Lord, he should have confidence that those in his congregation will joyously share it with him. He will not worry about how mistaken he may be in some viewpoint, for he will know that he will keep on being loved. And that he will be listened to, sweetly and reasonably.

The congregation is thus to be a community of compassion. It must create an atmosphere in which one is refreshed and encouraged. The fear that haunts one with "Maybe I am not right" kills the spirit of inquiry and thus hinders growth. Every child will stumble as he learns to walk, but we lovingly give him a hand and send him on his way again. Jesus describes the quest for truth as both narrow and difficult. One who embarks upon such a lonely journey needs the tender assistance of us all. When we see that he is wrong we will not press the panic button, but will realize that such is to be expected when one launches out on what is to him an uncharted sea. And each of us, if we really search for truth, must go his own way *alone,* Like Peter who was beckoned by the Lord to step out onto the water and walk to him, each of us must do his own thing, and in doing it we are to look ahead to Jesus, not down at the water and its dangerous waves, nor back at our brethren in the boat to see what they may be thinking. "Looking unto Jesus" is indeed a very personal thing.

Even as I composed the above paragraph Ouida brought to me another item about Pat Boone, sent to us in a letter from her sister, but originating in Lubbock. The *Sunset Story* for August 12 has boldface headlines reading "Pat Boone and Apostasy," which in turn quotes two other sources that read poor Pat right out of the church. The article closes with "Let us now recognize that Pat Boone is, in truth, a false teacher and has left the fold of God."

These brethren who are so simon-pure right about everything are not effected by Jesus' warning about "Judge not that you be not judged." And they conveniently ignore the apostle's insistence that we are to "Forbid not the speaking in tongues." They want to forbid Pat when Paul says not to forbid him. And that is the only charge leveled against him, that he now has "a prayer language," to put it the way Pat does in his book.

We are indeed a *peculiar* people, and that is scriptural, you know! In his book Pat describes his old life in the Church of Christ, describing the conflict between his professional life and church life. He even began to drink and gamble; his marriage was threatened; his life in the church was that of "a hypocrite," to use his term. But he was always at church on Sunday morning, however often he slept through a lot of the service.

He lived this way for a long time, but he never got into trouble with his brethren. Now that he is on fire for God, conducting studies in his home, calling on the *sick* at midnight, baptizing people in his pool, finding solidarity in his marriage and happiness in his family, we want to kick him out of the church!

The whole story is that Pat is now different from the rest of us, having experiences that run astray of our pre-ordained lines, and we can't take it. Priestcraft never tolerates the man who builds an altar that it has not blessed. Dare any man challenge the prerogatives of the Church of Christ priestcraft! Like Diotrephes of old, our priests will run the man out of the church on a rail that dares to hear a voice other than theirs. Pat could drink, gamble, flirt with pretty girls, and sleep through church and still be "loyal," but when his life bursts forth into a thing of beauty, radiating a love in the Spirit that he did not know was possible, we associate his name with "apostasy." The charge? Not adultery. Not embezzlement. He now speaks in tongues. Big deal!

What is wrong with us? Paul spoke in tongues "more than you all," perhaps more than Pat and Shirley put together. Are we going to disown the apostle?

The truth is that the Boones have not left the Church of Christ. They are members in good standing at the Inglewood congregation. The "hierarchy" in Lubbock and across the country should consult the elders of that congregation if they have any questions. And they should heed an old adage that makes Christian sense too: *Mind their own business!* It is not their prerogative to withdraw from the Boones and declare them apostate. One final note. Has it occurred to any of these folk that Pat and Shirley just might possibly be right? Is it remotely possible that they might have something that would enrich our own lives? Word comes from Nashville from a brother who sat in on a private meeting in that city with Pat, who agreed to explain himself to those assembled. Said the brother of Pat's testimony: "I don't know for sure what he has, but I sure wish I had it.

The Bible says something about our being "radiant with the Spirit." Are we a people with that kind of radiance? Well, Pat Boone is, according to the Nashville brother. And he wants it.

So, I insist that my plea for sweet reasonableness is in order. It isn't sweet to judge as apostate the brother who still loves Jesus and is doing his best to "walk by the Spirit." It isn't reasonable to arrogate unto ourselves such power over a man's soul that with a brush of the hand and a stroke of the pen we brand him as a false teacher. Heavens, where is our decency?

What do you suppose Jesus thinks of Pat and Shirley Boone these days? That is, I dare say (and how risky this is!), more important than what Lubbock thinks.—*the Editor*

The unity of the faith which we experience deeply must be realized in worship. There is little use to speculate about forms of a United Church before we have attained the *conditio sine qua non* for such unity. I mean fellowship at the Lord's Table.
—*Nathan Soderblom*, late Archbishop of Uppsala in Sweden

There is no reason for us to believe that we have more conflicts than our fathers. Each period of history shows its own conflicts. The question can, therefore, not be how man gets rid of his conflicts, but how he learns to use them in a creative and productive way.
—*H. van den Heuvel*, World Council of Churches, Geneva

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## THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TODAY

*By Pat Boone*

(This is the conclusion of excerpts from letters from Pat Boone to a professor at a Church of Christ college, who plans to publish a book in response to Pat's and Shirley's recent religious experiences. We pass this on to our readers with Pat's permission and with the expectation that it will encourage others in Churches of Christ to think and act for themselves and to be an individual before God.—*the Editor*)

*I believe the hope of the Church of Christ today is not to further develop a rigid pattern by which we make everybody alike, or try to, but in encouraging every Christian to find his own, individual, vital, active relationship with Jesus.*—Pat Boone

I am writing this from Japan. Just last night I spent some time with a Christian businessman from the States, who is a member of the church close to Osaka, and active with our Christian College here. He echoes the confusion and concern I find more and more all over the world in church circles: what do we have to offer that other groups don't have? How do we explain the division in Christianity in a way that a Buddhist or a Shinto or a Moslem or a heathen can understand? And after we convert them, how do we keep them?

He told me they've baptized 50 in the last 11 months, which is wonderful. But one by one they're all drifting away. The idea of Christ and salvation sounds good to them at first. They obey, in an initial way, but then so little happens. Even worship services soon begin to be routine and predictable. The "do's" and "don'ts" we teach have little effect. So these people slip back to their old familiar habits, and it is impossible to reach them again. Why?

So little happens! That's why.

Part of the problem is that we've esteemed ourselves as better than others. Strife and vainglory have abounded. Oh, I know we've felt we were defending doctrine, and in many instances we have been. But from this sense of "rightness" has come an air of superiority, which has a negative effect on others. Instead of letting God show them His will, perhaps through our example and humility, we've tried to bind others to our concepts, right or wrong, and judge, condemned and excluded them if they didn't agree with us.

Paul says in Philip. 2:13: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” He will do it if we will but let him, but we erect barriers both in ourselves and in others. We often just get in the way, and thus keep God from acting in people’s lives. We judge others and drive them away.

This is why people become discouraged and leave. We’re not letting God “work in us both to will and to do his good pleasure.” We want it done our way, according to our concepts of what His will is, instead of encouraging each Christian to find out what God’s will is for him, through his own study and prayer. We do not help people to find their own exciting and vital relationship with the Lord Jesus, who is just waiting and ready to “come in and sup with him.”

We are afraid to do that! Suppose someone comes up with a different conclusion than our own? What if they decide that God expects of them something different from what we believe God expects of them? That is too dangerous. We can’t tolerate that much freedom. ‘Tis better if we keep everything regulated and everybody alike, and tell these converts exactly what they must think on each point, as we do each other. That way we take no chances!

But that is why so little happens in people’s lives. They drift away, especially our own youth. And this brings me back to my main point, which comes from months of agonizing soul-searching, prayer and study: *I believe the hope of the Church of Christ today is not to further develop a rigid pattern by which we make everybody alike, or try to, but in encouraging every Christian to find his own, individual, vital, active relationship with Jesus.*

We are not to give a man all the answers. Ask him a few questions. Find out what *he* thinks, what *he* has discovered. Let him tell us what Jesus has shown him. Let’s do some listening and find out how God has acted in his life and answered his prayers, and been real to him. Surely we are to offer what guidance we can, but in a way that will encourage him to have his own adventure with the living God. And let’s not grow uneasy about where his adventure may take him!

This will sound dangerous to those who doubt God’s willingness and power to nourish that new convert. Do we really believe that passage that tells us that everything works together for good to those who love God?

I am not afraid any more about what influence my book may have. Even if I am wrong on some points, Even if I am wrong on some points, down no rules.* I don’t try to persuade people to be like me or believe like I believe. I simply tell my story. I encourage others to find their own answers and to discover their own relationship with Jesus. It does not have to be our way. I only want God “to work his own pleasure” in them. We urge everyone to read the Word, to see it as quick and relevant, and to allow God to speak to his own heart.

We can testify to the change that this has wrought in our own lives: the freedom, the joy, the intimacy with Christ, and the discovery that God is in control and ready to lead all who will be led.

I know how earnest you are and how you love God and reverence doctrinal purity. This is wonderful, but it must be mixed with an awareness of man's inherent fallibility. Even if you have studied for 40 years (or 400 or 4,000), it does not qualify you to make the final, emphatic pronouncements you make. Socrates asked questions; you make rules.

I know your love for me and Shirley, but I don't see this love manifested in your judgments and indictments, and in your use of personal letters and conversations in such a public way and *against our will.* We have asked that you address yourself to the issues and not against us personally. You are trying to make us the issue or our experiences, whereas you should consider the question of what God's Spirit will do or is doing today. You don't want to hurt us, and yet you know you are. It is not the personal harm I fear, but the effect this will have upon the church. Your promoting the choosing of sides, whereas in our book we have simply related an experience. Which is likely to cause more division, our telling what God has done in our lives or your rigid judgment and condemnation of people and ideas?

It is one thing to believe something strongly and to contend for it, but it is something else to feel so right about them that we condemn, judge and disfellowship those who disagree with us. This is what causes the divisions that result in a total break-down of communication. If Shirley and I are wrong about what we've come to believe about the Holy Spirit, we are much more likely to be led out of our error by loving fellowship and prayerful study than by the ranting and raving of accusations and the disfellowshipping that goes with it. I can't see that differences about the Holy Spirit should be a basis for disfellowship among us.

Some may feel they have to disfellowship or "withdraw" from us, even people we've never met, because we believe things they don't. This is sad and wrong, and I can see no Bible basis for it. The issue in this case is *deeper spirituality.* It is a matter of greater joy and commitment. If we are wrong or overzealous, God will correct us and overrule in what influence we may have on others.

And surely the time *must* come, hopefully soon if not now, when the church can have diversity without division. Then brethren in Christ can differ in their belief and experiences and still be brothers, for together they stand on the sure foundation, which is Christ (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Christians divided over the beliefs of Luther, Wesley, Calvin, and Campbell. This was because "the Establishment" felt compelled to withdraw from these poor, misguided souls who had the audacity to go their own way, interpret the Bible for themselves, and to choose God rather than the majority.

The Inglewood congregation has been given an opportunity for significant leadership in this regard. Our elders are harassed and pressured and questioned from all across the country. They have a golden opportunity to demonstrate the real meaning of congregational autonomy, which includes the God-given right of one man to differ from another in his study of the Bible, and the freedom to share his views with others. This is Inglewood's chance to show what Christian unity really means, that there can be diversity without division, as in 1 Cor. 12:3-21 and Eph. 4.

Inglewood has the opportunity to set an example before the entire brotherhood in being a congregation whose elders *do* lead the flock and instruct it, and in doing so allow the sheep their own individuality.

There are too many *men* in the church today and not enough *sheep.* I pray that we in the Church of Christ will trade in our men-qualities for sheep-credentials, and thus discover what it really means to be a new creature.

We have no selfish reason for making our experiences public. In fact publishing a book like *A New Song* runs the risk of destroying my career both in the entertainment world and in the church. It is therefore only because I believe God wants me to tell our story that I'm doing it. It is dedicated to Him. He knows it, and He knows my heart and my motives. He knows I intend to do His will. I believe Rom. 8:28 when it talks about everything working together for good to those that love God.

(You can order Pat Boone's controversial book, *A New Song*, from Restoration Review, 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas 76201. See "Book Notes" for more details.)

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## BOOK NOTES

### Pat Boone's New Song

The controversial book, *A New Song,* by Pat Boone is at last available. My family and I read this to each other over several sittings, and we were most impressed with its contents. It is a magnificent testimony from a brother and his family concerning their obviously sincere search for a dynamic faith. It is surprisingly candid, more so than it need be. But Pat lays bare his soul, confesses his sins, states his case, and leaves the consequences with God. He describes his moral dilemmas in show business, his financial difficulties, the near shipwreck of his marriage, and his prayerful search for an answer. While always legalistically right in his church life, his "hypocrisy" is spelled out in terms of partying,

drinking, gambling, and sleeping through church with liquor on his breath, even while being praised by preachers for being at the assembly.

Pat's problem, along with that of Shirley, his wife, was one common to so many religious people today, and in many churches beside the Church of Christ, and that is a religion that fails to meet the demands of our complex world. Pat could *see* that something was wrong. His faith lacked meaning and relevance. He professed Christ but did not really know him, he tells us, and this new confrontation with Christ came through the mediation of the Holy Spirit.

Pat's scripture-quoting Church of Christ background follows him all through the book, and yet his use of the Bible is so subtle and natural that one does not get any impression of being preached to or of any effort to persuade him to Pat's position. Pat is simply sharing his experiences, but he wants you to know that he has Bible for it.

The turning point comes when the Boones meet "Spirit-filled people," people baptized with the Holy Spirit, whose fruit seemed evident enough to the Boones. This eventually leads to what is now the most controversial aspect of what may be called "the Boone episode," the speaking in tongues. The Boones choose to call this "a prayer language," and it is Shirley who first has the experience, then Pat sometime later, and finally all three of the daughters.

It will be unfortunate if this tongues business is all that our people see when they read the book. It will be like the pussycat who visited the queen and spent her time chasing a mouse. The book has a real spiritual thrust, and it certainly has something to say. "A prayer language" or not, the real point is that a typical religionist of our time, who happens to be a public figure, found deliverance from his insipid faith by a real confrontation with Jesus. One theme of the book is certainly that *Jesus lives* for Pat and Shirley Boone. They searched and they found. They knocked and it was opened unto them. Jesus stood at their door, and they invited him in.

Along with being a star performer, Pat is an excellent writer. He has a way of laying open his heart and inviting the reader to step in. Once inside there is no escape. Pat captures anyone who loves Jesus by his own struggle for truth and freedom.

I was reading to Ouida and the children when Pat was describing how his world was crumbling around him, even his marriage. It reached the point where he decided to leave home. He reached the door, telling Shirley that there was no need trying anymore, and our kids supposed that another Hollywood divorce was in the offing. Is this Pat and Shirley Boone? When he tells how Shirley fell at his feet and begged him not to leave, that she loved him, and that somehow God would help them find an answer, I was all choked up and had to pass the reading chores along to Ouida.

You'll laugh and weep, I'll assure you. And if you are of the Church of Christ, you'll recognize Pat's many descriptions. And like ourselves, you'll appreciate his positive attitude toward the church of his youth, referring as he does to "our beloved Church of Christ." Pat is not mad at anyone. It is the simple and exciting story of a man who has *a new song*, which he sings elegantly, in true Pat Boone style.

I have one criticism of the publisher. 4.95 is too high a price. I wish it were cheaper. But we have them at that price, and you just must have one.

## Other New Books

For 1.65 we can send you a thoughtful little volume dealing with evolution and man's future entitled *Where Are We Headed?*, by a Christian zoologist named Jan Lever. Rejecting the literal interpretation of Genesis, he sees man, not as created spontaneously by the Divine potter out of dust, but as being formed from the highest living organisms. Yet it is definitely Christian in that it looks to God as creator and to man as being His chief end in the universe. His chapters on "The Origin of Life" and "Consciousness" you will find informative and perhaps intriguing. For our youth who are disenchanted with the way our leaders have responded to the claims of evolution, this book will serve as an honest and responsible effort toward a Christian compromise.

My favorite writer on freedom is that old libertarian Leonard Reed, of the Foundation for Economic Freedom. His newest book, like all his books, are not religious *per se*, and yet they deal with issues that are most relevant to the Christian's life. His idea, for instance that excellence is *caught*, not taught, is provocative. We invite you to try *Talking to Myself* for only 2.50. If you do not get your money's worth from such topics as "Education versus Propaganda," "Why Freedom is Not Trusted," and "When Freedom Becomes Second Nature," we'll return your money and no questions asked. Too, in reading Reed one learns a lot about how to make one's ideas clear. He is a brilliant writer and thinker, lucid and concise.

*Evangelism in the Early Church* by Michael Green is a substantial study of a neglected subject. Evangelists have a way of ignoring theology, while theologians are indifferent to evangelism. Prof. Green, of London Divinity School, is committed to both, and he gives us a work dealing with the nature of evangelism in the early church, its missions and its methods. He deals at length with the nature of the gospel. It is a book for the more serious student. A 350 page book, a price of 6.95 seems to be in line.

Another substantial work is *A Theology of the Holy Spirit* by Frederick Dale Bruner, which is a treatment of the pentecostal experience and the New Testament witness. There are extensive discussions of Holy Spirit baptism, tongues, gifts, and a treatment of every reference to the pentecostal idea in the scriptures. 8.95.

*Secular Christianity and God Who Acts* by Robert J. Blaikie will interest all those who are aware of the problem of secular religion. Asking the question *What is action?*, the author sees God as a God of action in science, medicine, education, history. The God who has died cannot be a God of action. T. F. Torrance writes the introduction, describing it as a book that comes to grips with some of the big problems facing the Christian in a secular world. 2.95.

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## READERS' EXCHANGE

### You Are Not Alone

It has been a long, rugged road out of legalism for me, into liberty, light and love. As for my telling my story for *Restoration Review,* some sordid chapters would make it inadvisable. But someday I'll try to write something that will be worthwhile.—*California*

Your articles by and concerning Pat Boone are very good, and his influence will help the cause of unity.—*Jere McWinn*

The more I am associated with the church in this area the more I am convinced that we are so steeped in tradition that we can hardly worship the Lord in spirit and in truth... For the past several weeks we have been worshipping with the colored congregation. As a result of this we have had many of the white brethren to turn their backs on us... I was encouraged by your report about brother Waters at the Lubbock unity meeting. I wish it were possible to have him on the lectures at Abilene, but because of the power of those in charge I know this is wishful thinking.—*Colorado*

We would urge the brother in Colorado to take heart and believe that the Holy Spirit can work wonders even in Abilene. For instance, a new annual series is beginning this January at ACC called *The Preacher's Workshop.* The agenda calls for a discussion of some of the live issues among us. There is to be open and free discussion, with no tape recorders allowed. It would be just the place for the likes of Ervin Waters. You see, I'm not surprised when great things like this develop, for I still believe and have hope.

As for the brother in California, his story is such a heroic one that I have urged him to tell our readers about it. Perhaps he will. We want the rank and file of brethren everywhere who are among the concerned ones to realize that they are not even almost alone. There are multitudes, even among the preachers, that are calling for and working for "a change in Washington."

We appreciate Jere McWinn's statement about Pat Boone's articles. I was impressed that Pat said as much as he did about unity in his new book. He insists that unity is the Spirit's fruit, not our achievement, and that the Spirit will make us one as we all yield to His leadership.

## Sweet Commendations

We love you for your honesty and openness and find the *Review* exciting and refreshing. I remember seeing you when I was a little girl back in Missouri.—*Indiana*

Please renew our subscription for five years and keep the balance to help in your wonderful work for our Lord. Thank you for your enthusiasm and love for Him.—*Texas*

I don't always agree with all that is printed, but I feel that it is good that your little publication has caused me to think for myself instead of taking as truth every view put forth by the "hierarchy" of the brotherhood.—*Texas*

Leroy, it was a real joy to meet you and your charming wife Ouida at Lubbock. Madelaine and I have enjoyed reading your tremendous little journal, *Restoration Review,* each month, and have hoped to meet you personally for a long time. I think your journal, along with *Mission Messenger* and others, is doing a great thing in helping and challenging many people to start their search for meaningful answers. I eagerly look forward to receiving it each month. Many thanks for your work of faith and labor of love through this medium.—*Frank Gifford, California*

I would like to take this brief moment to express my appreciation for you and your writings. I have not been a reader for very long, but I have grown to appreciate the thoughtfulness with which you discuss the various topics. You have truly stimulated my mind< and I hope the results are pleasing to the Lord.—*Oklahoma*

I continue to enjoy *Restoration Review* and find myself passing much of it on to the two classes I teach each week. I was opposed to some of our bound traditions a long time before I ever heard of *Restoration Review* or *Mission Messenger,* and even Freed-Hardeman wasn't able to bring about a purge of my thinking, but I appreciate your voice speaking out in such a dynamic way. Keep up the good work—*Tennessee*

Elsewhere in this issue I have a piece on *Sweet Reasonableness.* Well, I don't know how reasonable such letters are as the foregoing, as commendatory as they are of our work, but they are certainly *sweet!* I am always hesitant to publish compliments, and those that are *very* complimentary, I do not publish; but I file them away for my own personal encouragement as a girl might stash away her love letters. But we share the above with you so that you might see that many across the brotherhood are not only willing to think and act for themselves, but who also rejoice and thank God for their liberation. We are pleased to have a small part in this.

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RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly (except July and August) at 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas. Leroy Garrett, Editor. Second class permit at Denton, Texas. Subscription rate is $1.00 per annum; 50 cents in clubs of 6 or more.

*Address all mail to:* 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas 76201.*